REV. E. PAYSON'S

ADDRESS.

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ADDRESS

TO SEAMEN,

DELIVERED AT PORTLAND, OCTOBER 28, 1821;

AT THE REQUEST OF THE

Portland Auxiliary Marine Bible Society.

BY EDWARD PAYSON,
Pastor of the Second Church in Portland.

PORTLAND:
PRINTED BY THAYER, TAPPAN & STICKNEY, FOR THE SOCIETY.
1821.

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To every one, who possesses a particle of the spirit of our Saviour, it cannot but be highly gratifying to contemplate the gradual expansion of Christian benevolence;—the wide, and still wider circle of objects, which it has progressively extended its arms to embrace, during the last forty years. At the commencement of this period, scarcely a solitary individual was heard to raise his voice, in favour of the much injured and enslaved Africans. Now, their cause is pleaded with success before Parliaments and Senates; and powerful States make it an object of attention, in their negotiations with foreign powers. Then, excepting in this country, the numerous children of the poor were left, without education or moral instruction, a prey to ignorance, and to every species of vice. Now, in many parts of Europe, national societies are formed, and schools established on an extensive scale, to improve, at once, their morals and their minds. Then, the circulation of the scriptures was confined within comparatively narrow limits; and, of those by whom they were possessed, very few even thought of sending them

to the destitute. Now, thousands of hands are opened to distribute, and tens of thousands extended to receive, the inestimable gift. Then, the religious interests of the heathen were neglected. Now, the heralds of the cross preach to them, in many different languages, and in widely distant parts of the world, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Then, no provision was made for the spiritual wants of our own destitute countrymen. Now, means are in operation, to furnish them with able and faithful religious instructers. Then, the descendants of Abraham were forgotten, or remembered only to be despised. Now, vigorous and widely extended efforts are made, to effect their conversion to Christianity. Then too, mariners, composing a numerous and highly useful class of citizens in every commercial country, and forming a kind of connecting link between the different nations and parts of the world, were left to suffer, in their full force, all those moral and religious privations, to which their occupation subjects them; so that they might, with very few exceptions, have exclaimed;—We are men, "whom no one seeketh after; no man careth for our souls." Not only Christian nations, but Christian individuals, while enjoying the foreign productions, procured for them by the toils and perils of their seafaring brethren, seemed to forget, that they were feasting on "the price of blood;" the blood of neglected and perishing immortals.

But to this long neglected class of society also, Christian benevolence now extends her hand. Now, the spire of "the mariner's church" rises in the

midst of commercial cities, pointing the tempest tossed sons of ocean to a haven of rest above. Now, "the Bethel flag," under which seamen and landsmen unite to worship Him, who governs earth and sea, waves in many of their harbours. Now, Marine Bible Societies are formed; and the chest of every sailor may contain, if he will accept of it, that inestimable treasure, the Book which makes men, "wise unto salvation."

We rejoice to see, in the "Portland Marine Bible Society," a proof, that this recently awakened spirit of concern for the religious interests of seamen, lives and breathes among ourselves. We rejoice, my seafaring friends, to see so many of you assembled here, on this occasion. Most cordially do we bid you welcome, a thousand times welcome to the temple of Him, who is no less your GOD than our's. Welcome, welcome, weary, weather beaten sailor, to the place, where rest is offered to the weary in the name of Jesus Christ. For you this place is now opened. For you this Bible Society was formed. For you this meeting was appointed. For you our united prayers have now ascended before the mercy seat of Heaven. You it is, whom, as friends and brothers, the speaker now proposes to address.

And why does he address you? Why have we invited and welcomed you here, this evening? Because you are our fellow-creatures, our fellow-immortals. Because you are our shipmates in the great ship of this world; and are sailing with us to the shores of eternity. Because you have something within you, which thinks and feels; and that something is an

immortal soul; a soul worth infinitely more than all the merchandise, which you ever assisted in conveying across the seas; a soul worth more than all the stars which twinkle above you, while keeping your evening watch on deck; a soul, which will continue to live, and to be happy or miserable, when all those stars are quenched in everlasting night. Yes, mark me, shipmates, you have, each, such a soul within you; a soul dear to Him who made it; a soul for whose salvation Jesus Christ shed his blood; and for the loss of which, the whole world, could you gain it, would be no compensation. This precious freight, these immortal souls are embarked, in frail vessels, on the dangerous voyage of life; a voyage, which you are even now pursuing, and which will terminate, either in the Port of Heaven, or in the Gulf of Perdition. To one or the other of these places, you are all bound. In one or the other of them, you will all land at death. In which of them you shall land will depend on the course you steer. These are the reasons why we feel concerned for you; why we address you. We wish you to steer a safe course. We know there is but one such course. We wish you to make sure of a good harbour, in which you may rest quietly, after the toilsome voyage of life is ended. We know there is but one such harbour. We know that this harbour is not easy to find. We know that the sea over which you sail is full of sunken rocks and quicksands, on which many a brother sailor has made shipwreck of his soul. Your voyage is, therefore, exceedingly dangerous. We meet you pursuing this

voyage, and wish to speak you. When you speak a vessel, one of the first questions you ask her, is, "Where are you bound?" Allow me to ask you the same question. Ho, there, creature of God, immortal spirit, voyager to Eternity! whither art thou bound?—Heard I the answer aright? Was it, I don't know? Not know where you are bound! Heard you ever such an answer to this question before? Should you hear such an answer from a spoken vessel, would you not conclude its crew to be either drunk or mad? and would you not expect soon to hear of its loss? Not know where you are bound! And have you then, for so many years, been beating about in the fogs of ignorance and uncertainty; with no port in view; the sport of storms and currents; driven hither and thither as the winds change, without any hope of ever making a harbour, and liable, every moment, to strike upon a lee shore? Not know where you are bound! Alas, then, I fear you are bound to the Gulf of Perdition; and that you will be driven on the rocks of Despair, which are now right ahead of you, and which, sooner or later, bring up all, who know not where they are bound, and who care not what course they steer. If I have taken my observation correctly, you are in the Gulf Stream, a strong current which sets directly into the Gulf, where you will find no bottom, with a thousand fathom of line. Not know where you are bound! You must then be in distress. You have either unshipped your rudder, or you have no compass, chart, or quadrant on board; nor any pilot who can carry you into the Port of Heaven.

And what pilot, you will perhaps ask in reply, can carry us there? Who can tell us, with certainty, that there is any such port? On what chart is it laid down? And how do we know,—how do you know,—how can any man know, that what you have now told us is true?

These are fair questions, shipmates, and you shall have an answer; but allow me, first, to ask you a few questions.—Should you see a fine ship, well built, handsomely rigged, and completely equipped for a voyage, could any man make you believe, that she built herself? or that she was built by chance? or that she sprung, like a bubble, out of the sea? Would you not feel as certain, that she was the work of some builder, as if you had stood by, and seen him shape every timber, and drive every bolt? And can you, then, believe, that this great ship, the world, built itself? or that it was built by chance? or that it sprung out of nothing without any cause? Do you not feel as certain, that it was made by some great, and wise, and powerful builder, as if you had stood by and seen him make it? Yes, you will say, every ship is built by some man; but He that built all things must be more than man: He must be God.

Another question. Should you see a vessel go every year, for many years successively, to a distant port, and return at a set time; performing all her voyages with perfect regularity, and never going a cable's length out of her course, nor being a day out of her time, could you be made to believe, that she had no commander, pilot, or helmsman on board; that she went and came of her own accord; or that

she had nothing to steer her but the wind? Would you have any more doubt that she was under the command of some skilful navigator, than if you were on board, and saw him? Look then, once more, at this great ship, the world. See how regularly she makes her annual voyage round the sun, without ever getting out of her course, or being a day out of her time. Should she gain or lose a single day in making this voyage, what would all your Nautical Tables be good for? Now, would she go and come with such perfect regularity and exactness of her own accord? or with no one to regulate her course? Can you any more doubt that she is under the direction of some skilful commander, than if you saw him regulating all her motions? But if the world has a pilot, a commander, who is he? Aye, shipmates, who is he? Is it any of her crew? You know, that if they should all unite their strength, they could neither move her, nor alter her course a hair's breadth. Who, then, can it be? But why need I ask? Who can regulate all the motions of the world, except He, that made the world? And remember, shipmates, if God is here to regulate her course, he must be here to see how the crew behave.

Once more. Would a wise owner put a crew on board a vessel, and send her to sea, bound on a long voyage, without a compass, chart, quadrant, or pilot, to be driven just where the winds and waves might carry her, till she foundered, or went to pieces on some rocky shore? No, you reply, no wise owner, no man, that cared any thing either for the ship, or the ship's company, would act in this manner. And

would the good, the all wise God then, who made the world, and placed us in it, act in such a manner? Certainly not. It would be insulting him to think so. You may be certain, therefore, that he has taken care to provide a safe harbour, in which, when the voyage of life is ended, we may ride secure from every danger; that he has furnished us with every thing necessary to assist us in shaping our course for that harbour; and that he has provided a skilful pilot, who will carry us into it, if we put ourselves under his care. And, shipmates, we can tell you, for GOD has told us, that he actually has done all this. As a harbour, he has prepared heaven for us; a place so glorious, that the sun is not fit to be a lamp in it. Could you grasp the world like an orange, and squeeze all the happiness it affords into a single cup, it would be nothing to one drop of the waters of life, which flow there like a river. For a commander and pilot, he has given us, his own Son, Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation; beyond all comparison the most skilful, kind, and careful commander, that ever seaman sailed under. He can carry you, and he alone can carry you, safely into the Port of Heaven. No soul ever found its way into that port without him. No soul which put itself under his care, was ever lost. Finally, for a compass, chart, and quadrant, GOD has given us the BIBLE; and most completely does it answer the purpose of all three. By this book, as a compass, you may shape your course correctly; for it will always traverse freely, and it has no variation. By this book, as a quadrant, you may at any time, by night or by day, take an observation,

and find out exactly where you are. And in this book, as on a chart, not only the Port of Heaven, but your whole course, with every rock, shoal, and breaker on which you can possibly strike, is most accurately laid down. If then, you make a proper use of this book, mind your helm, keep a good look out, and carefully observe your pilot's directions, you will without fail, make a prosperous voyage, and reach the Port of Heaven in safety. It may not, however, be amiss, to give a few hints respecting the first part of your course.

If you examine your chart, you will find put down, not far from the latitude in which you now are, a most dangerous rock, called, the Rock of Intemperance, or Drunkard's Rock. This rock, on which there is a high beacon, is almost white with the bones of poor sailors who have been cast away upon it. You must be careful to give this rock a good birth, for there is a very strong current setting towards it. If you once get into that current, you will find it very difficult getting out again; and will be almost sure to strike and go to pieces. You will often find a parcel of wreckers round this rock, who will try to persuade you that it is not dangerous, and that there is no current. But take care how you believe them. Their only object is plunder.

Not far from this terrible rock, you will find marked, a whirlpool, almost equally dangerous, called, the Whirlpool of Bad Company. Indeed this whirlpool often throws vessels upon Drunkard's Rock, as it hurries them round. It lies just outside the Gulf of Perdition; and every thing which it swallows up, is

thrown into that Gulf. It is surrounded by several little eddies, which often draw mariners into it, before they know where they are. Keep a good look out then for these eddies, and steer wide of this whirlpool; for it has swallowed up more sailors, than ever the sea did. In fact, it is a complete Hell Gate.

Besides this whirlpool and rock, there are several shoals laid down in your chart, which I cannot now stay to describe. Indeed these seas are full of them, which makes sailing here extremely dangerous. If you would be sure to shun them all, and to keep clear of the terrible gulf, already mentioned, you must immediately go about, make a signal for a pilot, and steer for the Straits of Repentance, which you will then see right ahead. These Straits, which are very narrow, form the only passage out of the dangerous seas you have been navigating, into the great Pacific Ocean, sometimes called the Safe Sea, or Sea of Salvation, on the further shore of which lies your port. It is not very pleasant passing these Straits; and therefore many navigators have tried hard to find another passage. Indeed, some, who pretend to be pilots, will tell you there is another; but they are wrong; for the great Master Pilot himself has declared, that every one who does not pass the Straits of Repentance will certainly be lost.

As you pass these Straits, the spacious Bay of Faith will begin to open, on the right hand side of which you will see a high hill, called Mount Calvary. On the top of this hill stands a Light-House, in the form of a cross; which, by night, is completely

illuminated from top to bottom, and, by day, sends up a pillar of smoke, like a white cloud. It stands so high, that, unless you deviate from the course laid down in your chart, you will never lose sight of it in any succeeding part of your voyage. At the foot of this Light-House, you will find the Pilot I have so often mentioned, waiting for you. You must by all means receive him on board; for without Him, neither your own exertions, nor all the charts and pilots in the world can preserve you from fatal shipwreck.

As you enter the Bay of Faith, you will see, far ahead, like a white cloud in the horizon, the high lands of Hope, which lie hard by your port. These lands are so high, that, when the air is clear, you will have them constantly in sight during the remainder of your voyage; and while they are in sight, you may be sure of always finding good anchoring ground, and of safely riding out every storm.

I might proceed to describe the remainder of your course, but it is needless; for you will find it all in your chart, the Bible. With this chart, the Society which invited you here this evening, are ready to furnish every destitute seaman; and they do it on purpose that your voyage may be prosperous, and its termination happy. And now, shipmates, let me ask you one question more. Should a ship's crew, bound on a long and dangerous voyage, refuse to provide themselves with either quadrant, chart, or compass;—or, being furnished by their owner with these articles, should stow them away in the hold, and never use them, never mind their helm, keep no look out, pay no regard to their pilot's direc-

tions; but spend their time in drinking and carousing; have you any doubt that they would be lost, before their voyage was half over? And when you heard that they were lost, would you not say,—It is just as I expected; but they have no one to blame except themselves. Just so, my dear shipmates, if you refuse to receive the Bible, the book which your Maker and Owner has given, to assist in shaping your course;—or if you lay this book aside in your chests, and never study it;—or if you study it, and do not shape your course by it, nor pay any regard to the directions of Jesus Christ, your commander and pilot; but make it your only object, to live an easy, careless, merry life; be assured that you will make shipwreck of your souls, and founder in that gulf which has no bottom; and while you feel that you are lost, lost, lost forever, you will also feel, that you have no one to blame for it but yourselves. You cannot blame God, your Creator and Owner; for he has kindly given you his only Son, to be your pilot, and his book to be your chart. You cannot blame your fellow creatures; for, by the hands of this Society, they now offer you this book, "without money and without price." You cannot blame the speaker; for he has now told you what will be the consequence of neglecting this book. O, then, be persuaded to receive it, to study it, and to shape your course by it. Become yourselves members of this Bible Society, and persuade your comrades to do the same. Wherever you see the Bethel flag hoisted, rally round it. As often as you have an opportunity, visit the house of God on the sabbath, to hear what Jesus Christ has

done for poor seamen. If you see a brother sailor becalmed by the way, or steering another course, lend him a hand, and take him with you. Whenever you are keeping your evening watch on deck, look up, and see the God of whom you have now heard—the God whose name, I fear, some of you "take in vain," throned in awful silence, and darkness, and majesty, on the sky, crowned with a diadem of ten thousand stars, holding the winds and thunderbolts in his hand, and setting one foot on the sea, and the other on the land, while both land and sea obey his word, and tremble at his nod. This, shipmates, is the God, under whom, we wish you to enlist, and to whom, we wish you to pray. This is the God, who now offers to be the poor sailor's friend; and who, in all your voyages, can carry you out in safety, and bring you home in peace. This too, is the God, whom we shall all one day see coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory, to judge the world.—Then, at his command, the earth and the sea shall give up all, who had been buried in the former, or sunk in the latter, and they shall stand together before God to be rewarded according to their works. O then, seamen, landsmen, whoever you are that hear, prepare, prepare for this great day. Yes prepare, ye accountable creatures, prepare to meet your God; for He has said,—Behold I come, I come near to judgment! And hath He said it, and shall he not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall he not make it good? Yes, when His appointed hour shall arrive, a mighty angel will lift his hand to Heaven, and swear by Him who liveth forever and ever, that there shall be time no

longer. Then our world, impetuously driven by the last tempest, will strike, and be dashed in pieces on the shores of eternity. Hark! what a crash was there! One groan of unutterable anguish, one loud shriek of consternation and despair is heard, and all is still. Not a fragment of the wreck remains to which the struggling wretches might cling for support; but down, down, down they sink, whelmed deep beneath the billows of almighty wrath. But see! something appears at a distance mounting above the waves, and nearing the shore. It is the Ark of salvation! It is the Life Boat of Heaven! It has weathered the last storm; it enters the harbour triumphantly; Heaven resounds with the acclamations of its grateful, happy crew! Among them, may you all, shipmates be found. May the members of this Society, believing and obeying, as well as distributing the scriptures, save both themselves, and the objects of their care. And may every perishing immortal in this assembly now, while the Ark is open, while the Life Boat waits, while the rope of mercy is thrown within his grasp, seize it, and make eternal life his own.